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The Director of Central Intelligence

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National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Harry C. Cochran
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SUBJECT : The Shootdown of Flight 007 and Moscow's
Drive to Block INF Deployment

1. The downing of the Korean airliner abruptly altered the international climate and disrupted the Soviet leaders' methodical steps to set the stage for a major new anti-INF initiative in the next few weeks. The Soviets must now decide whether to hold to their carefully planned scenario for blocking INF deployment, or at least forcing a postponement, or to abandon this scenario and retreat to a strategy of aggressive political warfare and an escalation of previously threatened countermeasures in response to initial INF deployments in December.

2. It is too early to make more than a tentative judgment, but there is a 70 percent chance that Moscow will attempt to salvage its scenario and that the projected new negotiating initiative will still appear, although it may have to be postponed a few weeks. Given the high political and strategic stakes in the INF issue and the prestige and credibility Moscow has invested in blocking deployment, the Soviet leaders will not abandon their scenario before making major efforts in the next two months to get it back on track.

3. In the two weeks before the shootdown of Flight 007, Andropov had taken several initiatives calculated to prepare for a new proposal timed to capitalize on the West European anti-nuclear movement's plans to stage massive demonstrations this fall. He assured AFL-CIO vice president William Winpisinger on August 17 that the Soviet Union "will continue following a constructive and flexible line at the Geneva talks in the hope that the U.S. side will at last change its negative approach and show interest in an honest agreement." In a meeting the following day with nine U.S. Democratic Senators, Andropov renewed the Soviet proposal for a complete ban on anti-satellite weapons and pledged that the Soviet Union would not place any such weapons in space as long as other countries refrain from

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doing so. Andropov used a Pravda "interview" on August 26 to make what was intended to appear as a crucial "concession." He stated that if the U.S. renounces deployment of Pershing II's and GLCM's, the Soviet Union would "liquidate" all its missiles that are to be reduced under a U.S.-Soviet agreement, including a "considerable number" of SS-20's. On August 29, Andropov sent letters to the heads of government of NATO INF basing countries in which he reiterated his offer to "liquidate" all missiles that are to be reduced and blamed the "non-constructive attitude" of the U.S. for the deadlock at Geneva. Andropov also warned that INF deployment would make further negotiations "meaningless." Additional statements and proposals almost certainly were ready to be surfaced during September and October.

4. Moscow's initial reaction to the outrage abroad triggered by the shootdown strongly suggests that the Soviets are proceeding on the assumption that this outcry will be short-lived and that the ambiguities surrounding the incident--particularly the Administration's acknowledgement that a U.S. Air Force RC 135 had flown "close to" the Korean airliner for a few minutes over international waters off the Soviet coast and at one point had "crossed paths" with it--will enable the Soviets to muddle the issue and saddle the U.S. with part of the responsibility for the incident. Soviet propaganda can be expected to pound hard on charges that U.S. authorities failed to take steps to warn the Korean pilot that he was off course or, as the TASS statement on September 2 said, to "establish contact with the Soviet side and provide it with the necessary data about this flight." The TASS statement on September 3 quoted extensively from Western news reports that questioned Washington's account of the incident and voiced suspicion that the airliner was in fact engaged in an intelligence mission.

5. In the larger context of the contest over INF deployment, the Soviets clearly interpret the Administration's reaction as a calculated effort to exploit the shootdown in a way that will discredit Soviet "good faith" in the Geneva talks and neutralize the public impact of new Soviet proposals aimed at blocking or postponing deployment in December. The Soviets have tried to call attention to this perceived Administration strategy in their initial statements. TASS on September 2 condemned "those who consciously or as a result of criminal disregard have allowed the death of people and are now trying to use this occurrence for unseemly political aims." TASS also charged that "those who organized this provocation deliberately desired a further aggravation of the international situation, striving to smear the Soviet Union, to sow hostility to it, and to cast aspersions on the Soviet peace-loving policy." TASS again highlighted the theme of U.S. manipulation of the incident in its statement on September 3, accusing the White House of using its own "provocation" to generate a world-wide frenzy of anti-Soviet feeling as a means of "disrupting the normalization of the world situation." On September 5, TASS directly accused the Administration of using the incident to disrupt the new round of Geneva INF talks.

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6. The Soviets will continue to avoid anything resembling an apology and they will defiantly reject demands for restitution. If other governments follow Canada's lead in temporarily suspending Aeroflot landing rights, the USSR probably will counter by taking similar action against the landing rights of these countries in the USSR and perhaps in Eastern Europe, including Berlin. The Soviets will also undertake strenuous "active measures," especially in Western Europe, to discredit the Administration's account of the incident. They will use their agents of influence and access to foreign media to promote the themes advanced in Soviet statements and press articles. Soviet efforts to recover parts of the 747 suggest they hope to display "proof" of their claims that the airliner was a "reconnaissance aircraft performing special tasks in the airspace of the USSR."

7. The outcome of the war of words over the shootdown may have far-reaching implications for Soviet policy in the next 14 months. The Administration's stern rhetoric almost certainly will stimulate demands in senior party and military circles for a tougher attitude toward the U.S. and, specifically, for measures aimed at reducing the President's prospects for re-election in November 1984. Soviet statements reveal what seems to be genuine resentment toward the President. The statement on September 2 denounced the "impudent, slanderous statement with respect to the Soviet Union that was instantly made by President Reagan." TASS on September 3 ridiculed the President's "thoroughly hypocritical sorrow" over the incident and defiantly asked, "Does Mr. President believe that the very concept of national sovereignty no longer exists and one may intrude with impunity into the airspace of independent states? Or is he viewing the whole world now as a 'zone of U.S. vital interests?'" The Soviet government statement on September 6 disdained the President as an "ignoramus" and "cynic." It is always hazardous to attach great significance to Soviet bombast, but these manifestations of animus appear to exceed the intensity of "normal" personal attacks on American Presidents in the last decade.

8. It seems likely that these tirades against the President have been inspired primarily by a conviction that the Administration deliberately disregarded well-known and understood "rules of the game" in condemning the shootdown. The President's use of such terms as "barbaric act," "airline massacre," and "crime against humanity" touched exposed nerves in the proud Soviet leaders. The President's formulation contrasting the Soviet regime with "civilized societies" and his skepticism about conducting "legitimate mutual discourse with a state whose values permit such atrocities" struck the Soviets as a particularly offensive denial of their claims to be treated as the superpower equal of the U.S.

9. In sum, Moscow's attitude toward the President and its course of action in the short-term (3 to 6 months) will be conditioned by a conviction that although the Administration was fully aware of past Soviet warnings, regularly recorded on commercial aviation maps, that aircraft intruding into Soviet

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airspace were subject to being shot down, and of the Soviet Air Force's rules of engagement regarding penetrations of Soviet airspace, the Administration deliberately chose to ignore these facts in order, in TASS's words, to mount a "rabid anti-Soviet campaign." As James R. Schlesinger observed in The Washington Post on September 4, "Warnings issued, (the Soviet Union) has been wholly unprepared for the worldwide reaction of outrage. It could not conceive how offensive to Western and other opinion is the needless destruction of civilians. After all, warnings had been issued, a civilian airliner had been fired upon and forced down in 1978, and there were good and sufficient reasons of state...Given the Soviet cast of mind and Soviet operational procedures, the outcome was highly probable, if not foreordained, once so deep a penetration occurred in so sensitive an area."


10. The dilemma facing the Soviet leaders in the next three months is that strong measures to settle accounts with the Administration for its perceived deliberate overreaction will threaten to undercut Moscow's scenario for blocking or delaying INF deployment--still the first priority of Soviet policy. Any significant reprisals against Washington would play into the hands of West European governments committed to deployment on schedule and neutralize much of the public impact of ostensible Soviet concessions portrayed as a final bid for a compromise agreement. In view of the liabilities inherent in an escalation of political warfare against the Administration in the next three months, it seems likely that the Soviets will defer major moves to damage the President's electoral prospects until the outcome of their anti-INF campaign is clear.

11. The Soviets probably believe that the outcry over the shootdown will have subsided by late October and that the climate will then be favorable for launching what will be touted as a major concession tailored to break the impasse at Geneva. The actual purpose of this initiative, of course, will be to stimulate a wave of public opposition in Western Europe to INF deployment on schedule--a wave strong enough to compel the Kohl government and other basing countries to press hard for a postponement in order to afford more time to explore a compromise agreement. The Soviets, for example, may couple a call for a mutual moratorium on further deployments of medium-range missiles as long as the Geneva talks continue with offers to defer Soviet demands for reductions in NATO Forward Based Systems (FBS) and to reduce Soviet SS-20's to a level one-third that of combined British and French missiles in order to compensate for the three warheads carried by each SS-20, thereby equalizing the total number of warheads on each side. This offer, of course, will require renunciation of NATO's INF deployments. The Soviets would anticipate a categorical rejection of such a package by the U.S. and the NATO basing countries. Its purpose would be to generate public and political pressures in Western Europe for postponing deployment sufficient to confront NATO governments, particularly West Germany, with a choice between defying these pressures and risking violent protest demonstrations or acquiescing in strident demands for an indefinite postponement of deployment.

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12. It is in this context of "coercive diplomacy" that the Soviet leaders probably perceive the downing of the Korean airliner as a definite asset. This episode, in Moscow's eyes, will stand as a formidable example of the Soviet Union's resolve and capacity to respond forcefully to perceived threats to its security interests. The Soviets have always placed high value on cultivating a reputation for ruthless defense of their vital interests. They probably have persuaded themselves that the shootdown will reinforce the credibility in Western Europe of threats to take countermeasures in response to INF deployment. Given their traditional reliance on the intimidation value of overwhelming military power and their belief in the efficacy of bluffs and threats, the Soviets can be expected in the next three months to orchestrate putative concessions with increasingly ominous warnings about the inevitable consequences of INF deployment.

13. Andropov warned the nine Democratic Senators on August 18 that deployment "will have far-reaching consequences which will inevitably affect the United States as well. The Americans will also feel the differences between the situation which existed before deployment and which will take shape after it." The Soviet leaders' perception of the Administration's motives in responding to the shootdown may move them to opt for stronger and riskier countermeasures against the U.S. than they had contemplated before August 31. Although it still seems unlikely that the U.S. response to this incident will in itself overcome Moscow's prudent unwillingness to provoke a direct confrontation by installing offensive missiles in Cuba or basing missile submarines at Cuban ports, the domestic political fallout from this incident may oblige Andropov and his allies in the leadership to confront the U.S. with more "far-reaching consequences" than the pre-shootdown Soviet scenario had projected.


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